

What Makes an Outstanding Junior Theater Program?

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When parents enroll their child in a theater program, they have definite hopes and expectations. Most parents expect their child will gain greater self-esteem and creativity. Some hope their child will get a lead role in the final performance, with lines to belt out and maybe even songs to embrace. They hope their child will have fun and they expect techniques will be learned and applied to help their child advance to the next level. Some parents just want their child to have fun and learn something new. Here are some helpful tips and information to keep in mind as you search for a program that meets your family's needs and rises above the rest.

Auditioning For a Part vs. Acceptance For All

Auditioning for roles at community or professional theaters will result in a role in a production or a rejection. Many parents cringe at the thought of their child feeling rejection of this type because he or she may not be mature enough to handle it. Katie Preisig, our Theater and Voice Instructor / Junior Camps Assistant Camp Director, says, "Rejection, at too young an age, can cause withdrawal from theater before the interest has a chance to fully develop. This isn't to say that naturally talented and gifted children shouldn't pursue more advanced avenues of theater if that's where their heart lies. If that's the case, then rejection will come early, and so will the ability to handle it." If the fear of rejection is stopping you from enrolling your child in a theater program, then you will want to choose one that is curriculum-based, accepting all experience levels. Choose a program in which the mission is to provide education, creativity, and confidence as opposed to putting on a premier production for an audience. When kids are comfortable in their environment they will learn faster, and this will come shining through in the final performance.

Stage Time

In traditional plays, not every part is created equal, giving some children more time on the stage than others. Look for a program that addresses the need for all children to have an equal learning and acting opportunity, providing each student with the same amount of

lines, lyrics, and stage time. LINX Theater has made this a reality, as the directors write the scripts and adapt stories to fit the needs of the young actors. Each child can then learn, rehearse, and perform at an optimum and equal level.

Curriculum

The difference between being cast for a role in a community or professional theater production and in an educational theater program is in the curriculum. In the former, children learn more from watching other children and older performers, while in the latter they learn through a curriculum deliberately designed to teach about theater technique with a production at the end of the session. With a good curriculum, students experience lessons in theater while rehearsing for their production. Young aspiring actors need to learn about ensembles, pantomime, the differences between theater, movies and TV, and more. Theater games and fun improv challenges can round out the experience creating a relaxed learning environment to help fuel a lifelong passion for acting.

Focus on Fun and Learning

Choosing a program based more on fun and learning, and less on the final show, where every child participates equally, will result in a young performer who is more likely to want to explore their theatrical interests. We've seen our children put on plays in the living room with their friends and siblings, and you've probably had a blast doing it yourself as a child. Why do kids like to do this so much? Because it's FUN! Now add education and equal roles for all to the mix and everyone wins!

Participation in a theater program is an investment in your child's creative education that will inspire self-confidence and a love for the performing arts. I hope this article has given you some helpful information, and maybe even criteria to help you choose an outstanding theater program to best suit your young aspiring actor.

For more information about LINX Theater programs, contact LINX at information@linx-usa.com.